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The Iceland Suite: Monotypes

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The numbers in the table show that the population of color has always been more numerous than the white population in Brazil. It is also clear that in the very beginning of colonization (1516-1600) the indigenous population (whose first language was not Portuguese) were more numerous than the Africans or the white population. However, this native population, which comprised half of the inhabitants in the first century of colonization, was reduced to 4% and 2% in the 19th century (that is, in the periods of 1851-1870 and 1881-1890, respectively). What was the linguistic background of indigenous Brazilians? One author, Ayrton Rodrigues, calculates that there were around 1,175 different indigenous languages in Brazil, of which 85% were lost after the colonial period. Nowadays, although this number has been reduced considerably, Brazil is still one of the most multilingual countries in the world, with approximately 150 languages spoken by some 260,000 indigenous people.

During the next historical period (from 1601 to 1700), there were more Africans than any other ethnic group, diminishing the linguistic impact of the indigenous languages. Later, in the 18th and 19th centuries, the number of those born in Africa steadily dwindled, while at the same time, the number of Black Brazilians and those of mixed ancestry increased. These numbers reflect the high degree of racial mixing that existed in Brazil and might clarify the complex racial and linguistic situation particular to that country.

What are the ethnolinguistic origins of the Africans who arrived in Brazil? Apparently speakers from several different linguistic groups (including Mande, Kru, Gur, Kwa and Bantu) arrived in Brazil during three centuries of slave trade. Of these, the Bantu group came in the greatest numbers, comprising between 50% to 65% of all African slaves. It is approximated that of the African languages that contributed to Brazilian Portuguese, the Bantu languages (Kikongo, Kibumdu and, to a lesser extent, Umbundu) were the biggest suppliers of African-based conversational words. In other Caribbean countries, such as Haiti, the ratio of people of color to the white population is much higher: people of African descent comprised around 90% of the Haitian population. It is not surprising, then, that Haitian Creole is one of the languages now spoken on that Caribbean island.

Because of this multilingual tapestry in Brazil, the Portuguese language became the essential unifying mode of communication in a developing nation. Thus, a 60% to 40% ratio of Black and white population that was present in Brazil might not warrant overarching conclusions about the development of Brazilian Portuguese, but it gives any linguistic food for thought. In addition, some scholars believe that the presence of so many popular as well as cultivated varieties of the language almost guarantees that no overarching explanation about the origin of the more non-standard variety of Brazilian Portuguese can be attained. Helena Mello argues that “the likeliest scenario of language contact in Brazil was a process of imperfect language shift to Portuguese by the African and Amerindian populations and their descendants.” By “imperfect language shift” it is understood that not all accepted grammatical norms of European Portuguese were maintained by later generations.

The possible scenarios regarding the development of Brazilian Portuguese (i.e. natural linguistic drift or the contribution of African languages) should run parallel in discussing particular linguistic patterns. Judging from the large presence of people of African descent in Brazil, it is probable that non-native speakers of Portuguese were at least potentially able to make a significant linguistic contribution to this Romance language. More comparisons of non-standard varieties of European Portuguese as well as Portuguese-based Creoles (such as Cape Verdean) could give scholars other important pieces of the puzzle.

—Fernanda Ferreira is Assistant Professor of Foreign Languages
After returning from the trip, I made a number of exploratory drawings and several monotype prints inspired by what I had experienced. My goal was to capture the essence of the rugged beauty of Iceland through scale, form, and technique. My images were based on memory and on the photographs that I took during my trip.

I set out to create a portfolio of twenty 9" x 12" monotype prints, to explore the spirit of the Icelandic landscape—the variety of surfaces, textures, and forms created by volcanic eruptions, lava, glaciers, erosion, flooding, vegetation, and steam and thermal waters. In developing twenty different images, I challenged myself to express in each a primal connection with the earth using a minimum of graphic definition. For painterly and textural effects, I utilized the properties of the monotype process where ink was applied and wiped, as well as the properties of the ink itself—its viscosity, its solubility. The prints display an economy of visual form. To convey a sense of drama and starkness, I chose to use black and white. Seven prints from the portfolio are on these pages and on the cover.
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During the period from February 25–March 11, 2002, a scientific survey of Massachusetts citizens was conducted by a research group which included Professor Victor DeSanctis of the Institute of Regional Development and Professors Michael Kryzanek, Brendan Burke, David Hill (now of Valdosta State University) and Mark Kenney, all of the Political Science Department. The purpose of the survey was to understand the political attitudes and behaviors of a random sample of citizens across the state, especially with respect to participation in the political process. The research was part of a larger study of key policy concerns commissioned by the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Society for Public Administrators. The complete study will be presented to Governor Mitt Romney in January in book form under the title of ‘Memo to the Governor.’ The essential parts of the study on participation are presented below.

To examine citizen participation of Massachusetts national elections the survey asked the respondents to report the approximate frequency of voting in presidential elections across their adult life, and whether or not they intended to vote in the upcoming midterm elections. To explore citizen contact with government officials the survey asked respondents whether or not they had contacted a government official within the last twelve months. Finally, respondents were asked several questions regarding their participation in community politics, such as attending town meetings, serving on governmental and non-governmental boards, and working with others to solve community problems.

The data shown in Figure 1 suggest a moderate to high degree of citizen participation in presidential elections. Fifty-eight percent of respondents stated they had voted in all presidential elections, and another 21% stated they had voted in more than half of the presidential elections during their adult life. While these data do indicate a high degree of overall participation, it is important to compare participation across demographic groups due to the differential voting rates across social groups. On a national level, electoral participation is strongly related to social characteristics.

The data in this project suggest this pattern is also present among Massachusetts respondents. Age, education, income, and length of residence are all positively and significantly related to electoral participation, which indicates that individuals from higher socioeconomic groups, older Americans, whites, individuals who attend church frequently, and those with longer tenure in the current community report a higher frequency of voting in presidential elections.

Questions were also asked regarding respondents’ intention to vote in elections of November, 2002. Eighty-seven percent of respondents stated they intended to vote in the fall elections. There are several potential reasons for this very high proportion of respondents reporting the intention to vote in the 2002 elections. One is simply that a larger proportion of respondents stated they intended to cast a ballot in the upcoming election than will actually show up on Election Day. Additionally, with a relatively high-profile gubernatorial race in November many respondents may have been influenced to state their intention to vote due to the increased publicity given the race. Finally, there is the possibility that in the wake of September 11th politics and duty to country became more salient to citizens.

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"Memo to the Governor"

Citizen Participation in Massachusetts

by Members of the Political Science Department

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Figure 1. Voting History of Respondents.